

2/3/76

Ex-Envoy, Life Staffer Went On Secret '63 Raid to Cuba

United Press International

CIA agents, Cuban exiles, a reputed Mafia contact man, a former U.S. ambassador and a newsman for Life magazine slipped into Cuba by boat in 1963 in a daring raid designed to capture two Soviet missile technicians on the island, according to participants in the raid.

One of the participants, former Ambassador to Brazil and Peru William Pawley, said yesterday that Life joined the party and paid the commandoes in exchange for exclusive rights to the story.

But Time, Inc., Life's parent company, and the Life journalist accompanying the raiders, Richard Billings, denied that Life had financed the expedition.

PAWLEY, NOW 79, labeled the project a failure. He said the Cubans put ashore were never heard from again and were presumably captured or killed.

Billings, former Miami bureau chief for Life magazine, confirmed most of the details published yesterday in City, a San Francisco magazine.

In Miami, Pawley also confirmed he navigated his personal yacht that carried the raiding party to Cuba. He said Life paid the commandos between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

Pawley said he refused to take any Life staffers along on grounds the mission was "too dangerous." But Billings, in Washington, said he was there and described the event in some detail.

PAWLEY SAID HE personally put up about \$20,000 to cover the rest of the costs of the project, which was launched because the two Russian missile technicians reportedly were ready to defect. That would have proved the Soviets still had missiles in Cuba one year after the 1962 missile crisis.

Pawley and Billings were commenting on a story co-authored by journalist Warren Hinckle, formerly of Ramparts magazine, and former FBI agent William Turner in the West Coast magazine City.

Pawley said Sen. James Eastland, D-Miss., informed him in 1963 there might be Russian technicians still in Cuba and asked whether he could

help an attempt to get them out. Although both he and Eastland were skeptical about the project, Pawley said, he gave it a try because "information on Russian missile bases in Cuba would have been very valuable to the U.S. government."